

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-44

NEW YORK TIMES

8 April 1984

FILE ONLY

Frank Church of Idaho, Who Served in the Senate for 24 Years, Dies at 59

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 7 — Frank Church of Idaho, a member of the Senate for 24 years and for a time the chairman of its Foreign Relations Committee, died today at his home in suburban Bethesda, Md. He was 59 years old and had been suffering from pancreatic cancer.

The White House issued a statement from President Reagan praising Mr. Church for "his abiding interest in foreign policy" that he said made "an important intellectual contribution to our country."

A Senate colleague, Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, said Mr. Church was a "courageous leader against the war in Vietnam."

A memorial service will be held at 11 A.M. Tuesday at the National Cathedral. The speakers will be Senator Kennedy, Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, former Senator George A. McGovern of South Dakota, Cecil D. Andrus, a former Secretary of the Interior and Governor of Idaho, and one of Mr. Church's sons, the Rev. F. Forrest Church, minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City.

Frank Church, at one time the "boy orator" of the United States Senate, had two major ambitions. He wanted to be President of the United States and he wanted to be chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In the spring of 1976, he waged a three-month campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination, making a surprisingly strong initial showing by winning primaries in Idaho, Nebraska, Oregon and Montana. He eventually withdrew, however, and endorsed former Gov. Jimmy Carter of Georgia, who went on to become President.

But Mr. Church achieved his other goal, becoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1979. He lost his Senate seat to Steven D. Symms, a Republican, in the 1980 landslide election of Ronald Reagan.

In his 24 years in the Senate, starting in 1957, when he was 32 years old, Frank Church became a leading, often eloquent voice of liberalism, strongly supporting civil rights protection, expanded benefits for the elderly, other social service programs and equal rights for women. He was a leading conservationist and a strong supporter of statehood for Alaska and Hawaii.

But it was primarily in foreign affairs that he made his mark, both before and after his chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee. He strongly supported the 1963 nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union. In 1966, concerned over increasing American involvement in Vietnam, he broke with the Johnson Administration by urging a halt in bombing.

"No nation," he said that year, "not even our own, possesses an arsenal so large or a treasury so rich as to damp down the fires of smoldering revolution throughout the whole awakening world."

As the war in Southeast Asia continued to widen, he stepped up his opposition. In 1970, he co-sponsored a Senate measure to prohibit continued deployment of United States ground troops in Cambodia, touching off a six-month Senate debate. Two years later, he and Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, sought to end all American military activities in Southeast Asia.

But it was in the field of trying to curb "criminal activity" by United States intelligence agencies that he made perhaps his most important contribution, praised by some, criticized by others. The vehicle for examining activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation was the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, established in 1975 under Mr. Church's chairmanship.

In its final report, the committee made nearly 100 recommendations for curbing such abuses as illegal wiretaps, break-ins, surveillance, harassment of political dissidents, assassination plots against foreign leaders and campaigns to smear civil rights activists.

While the inquiry resulted in only a limited amount of legislation, it was clear as time passed that the disclosures of illegal activities by the agencies led to curbs of such abuses.

Senator Church had just completed work on the intelligence investigation when he traveled to the little mountain community of Idaho City to announce his candidacy for the Democratic Presidential nomination. It was something of a nostalgic choice of sites; it was in Idaho City that his grandfather settled in a gold rush after the Civil War.

But home to Frank Forrester Church was not Idaho City. He was born July 25, 1924, in Boise, the son of a sporting goods dealer. The family was strongly Republican. It was years later that Mr. Church became a Democrat.

As a student in Boise High School, he developed a love for oratory, winning first prize in the American Legion's national Americanism oratorical contest. A year later, after graduating from high school, he entered Stanford University.

His stay at Stanford was brief, for he enlisted in the Army in late 1942 and was sent to Officers' Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. On his 20th birthday, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and served as a military intelligence officer in China, Burma and India in World War II.

Graduation and Marriage in '47

Returning to Stanford after the war, he won a Phi Beta Kappa key and was graduated in 1947. He was married that summer to Jean Bethine Clark, whose father had once been a Democratic Governor of Idaho.

That fall, he entered Harvard Law School but switched to Stanford after suffering severe back pains; he thought a warmer climate might ease his back. However, doctors discovered that he had cancer and told him he had six months to live. After undergoing surgery to have a testicle removed, and radiation treatments, he returned to Stanford Law School, winning his degree in 1950.

Moving back to Boise, he began practicing law and teaching public speaking in the Boise Junior College. A Democrat by that time, he ran for a seat in the Idaho Legislature, but lost.

He set his sights higher, this time on the United States Senate. In 1956, at 32, he won the election, defeating an incumbent Republican, Herman Welker.

In 1960, Senator Church gained national prominence when he delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. His speech was appraised by commentators as long on rhetorical flourishes but short on substance. Years later, admitting he had been something less than a smashing success with the speech, he said: "All I can say in my defense is, I didn't know any better."

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When he entered the race for the Presidential nomination in the spring of 1976, he conceded that he was a "long shot" but that "it's never too late to try."

A Meeting With Castro

After his unsuccessful effort, he resumed his role as an important voice on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In the summer of 1977, he met in Cuba with Fidel Castro, which led to the Cuban leader agreeing to allow 84 American citizens and their families to leave that country. Senator Church also served as floor leader for ratification of the Panama Canal treaties in 1978.

But in the final years of the Carter Administration, he found himself at odds with the President as his own time for Senate re-election approached. In 1979, he demanded immediate withdrawal of Soviet combat troops from Cuba before allowing a Senate vote on ratification of the second treaty with the Soviet Union on limitation of strategic arms.

Years later, Jimmy Carter wrote in his book, "Keeping Faith," that Senator Church had been "absolutely irresponsible" in disclosing "confidential

information" about the Soviet presence in Cuba, ascribing the move as an effort by the Senator to fend off conservative opposition to his re-election. Senator Church later denied the Carter allegations.

There were clear indications, however, that Senator Church had sought to mute his liberal image in other ways as the 1980 election neared. He was one of six Democratic Senators selected for defeat by conservative political organizations. The campaign was both bitter and expensive. It cost Mr. Church's organization \$4 million and was the most expensive political campaign in Idaho's history.

After his defeat by Mr. Symms, Mr. Church practiced international law as a Washington-based partner in the New York law firm of Whitman & Ransom. He wrote occasional articles, including one published in The New York Times Magazine, criticizing the the Reagan Administration for anti-Soviet ideology.

In addition to his wife and son F. Forrest, he is survived by another son, Chase Clark of Bethesda, and two grandchildren.

After Tuesday's memorial service, a family spokesman said, the body will be flown to Idaho on Wednesday. The body will lie in state in the Capitol rotunda in Boise until the funeral at 2 P.M. Thursday at the Cathedral of the Rockies.